



SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

Executive Committee Meeting

October 24, 2006, 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM
Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Seattle

Introduction

Aubrey Davis, SR 520 Executive Committee Chair, welcomed the committee. He expressed his condolences on the passing of Jim Leonard, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) representative, and recognized his contributions to the Project. Aubrey announced that James Christian would be representing FHWA for the meeting.

The purpose of this meeting was for members of the Executive Committee to receive an update on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) comments, as well as updated cost estimates for each alternative. The next Executive Committee meeting, scheduled for November 15, will be an opportunity for each jurisdiction to report on its preferred alternative.

Project Update

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Community and Jurisdictional Outreach

John Milton, SR 520 Project Director, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), reported that 800 printed copies of the Draft EIS were distributed to agencies, public officials, libraries, and community groups for the August 18, 2006 document release. John noted that the document was also available to the public for purchase at the SR 520 project office, free on CD-ROM, and free for download from the Project Web site. John reported that the project team received a record number of comments from the public and extended the comment period to October 31, 2006, to give agencies and citizens the opportunity to further review the Draft EIS and comment.

John summarized some of the community and jurisdictional outreach done by the project team prior to and during the Draft EIS comment period. These efforts include:

- Discussed the Project with approximately 4,000 community members at summer fairs and festivals and 200 citizens through the SR 520 public hearings in September
- Conducted 28 public briefings to cities and town councils.
- Conducted 18 community and neighborhood organizations briefings
- Placed the project traveling display at various public/community centers along the Project corridor

Coordination with the University of Washington

John updated the committee members on the University of Washington (UW) workshops that included the UW Medical Center, UW Athletic Department, Arboretum/Botanic Gardens, Sound Transit, City of Seattle, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Parks Department, King County Metro, and WSDOT. Topics discussed at the workshops included construction effects and coordination with other projects, and issues regarding traffic, transit, and parks. The primary topics of discussion were the Pacific Street Interchange

and the Second Montlake Bridge 6-Lane Alternative design options. Discussions with the UW will continue as the Project moves forward towards a preferred alternative.

Citizen Concepts: Tube and Tunnel

John updated the committee on a citizen concept introduced in the fall of 2005 by citizens from the Madison Park and Roanoke neighborhoods. This citizen concept introduced the idea of a tunnel between I-5 and the SR 520 floating bridge, and suggested that this alternative would relieve congestion, improve connections to I-5, be better for the environment, and reduce the Project costs. WSDOT conducted additional analysis on the concept to identify possible issues, including geometry, construction, engineering (dredging/boring, etc.), environmental impacts, costs, and risks. WSDOT concluded that the tunnel concept would increase the net environmental effects, and be extremely difficult to construct due to structural stability limitations, size of interchanges, safety issues, and complex connections. In addition, this concept would cost significantly more than any of the current plans. John explained that based on this analysis, the four to five mile tube/tunnel concept was eliminated from consideration.

Citizen Concepts: Citizens for a Saner Solution Draft Concept

John also discussed a concept introduced by "Citizens for a Saner Solution" that proposes to alter the Pacific Street Interchange 6-Lane Alternative design option. Key points of this concept as stated by the citizen group are to:

- Reduce the width and height of SR 520 between Foster Island and Montlake
- Provide direct transit/HOV access to the Pacific Street intersection at the UW, while reducing the footprint
- Provide long-term opportunities for future light rail connections using Union Bay Bridge
- Provide vehicular access to SR 520 via major arterials
- Provide bicycle access to/from boulevard rather than major arterial, and separate bicycle access from SR 520 exiting traffic for both north and southbound travel as well as provide possible direct connection to Pacific Street intersection

John said that WSDOT is currently reviewing this concept and will provide a response in the Final EIS.

Expert Review Panel Follow-up

Dave Dye, Urban Corridors Office Administrator, WSDOT, provided an update on the Expert Review Panel. During the 2006 legislative session, HB 2871 authorized creation of an Expert Review Panel to evaluate the implementation and finance plans for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project and the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project. Dave reported that the Panel found that the SR 520 implementation plan was sufficient for the level of design of the Project, but the Project's finance plan was optimistic and a significant funding gap existed for the Project, no matter which alternative would be selected. The Panel supported WSDOT's overall cost estimate approach and recommended that WSDOT consider higher inflation rates and the increased cost of construction materials. Dave reported that WSDOT updated Project cost estimates per the Panel's recommendations, which resulted in an expanded cost range. Dave emphasized that further Project development should achieve the Project at a mid-range of likely costs.

Dave explained that new cost ranges reflect compounding inflation rates and then he introduced the new most likely numbers, as shown below:

SR 520 Bridge Updated Project Cost Estimates*			
Range	4-Lane (with Montlake Interchange)	6-Lane (with Montlake Interchange)	6-Lane (with Pacific Interchange)
Low	\$2.04 billion	\$2.84 billion	\$3.34 billion
Likely	\$2.70 billion	\$3.9 billion	\$4.38 billion
High	\$3.47 billion	\$4.87 billion	\$5.34 billion

Questions/Comments

Q: Aubrey Davis asked if inflation is on the higher side, will it also have an effect on revenue based on community prices, sales, etc. What will this mean for the Project?

A: Dave Dye responded that bonding costs increase along with the cost of construction.

Q: Claudia Balducci, City of Bellevue City Council, asked if tolling was included in the financial planning.

A: Dave Dye confirmed tolling is part of the Project finance plan.

Q: Claudia Balducci asked if the costs above the \$2.7 billion 4-Lane Alternative would be a regional responsibility.

A: Dave Dye replied that the state is responsible to develop a funding plan to replace the existing capacity of the facility and additional costs could be funded by regional or federal sources.

Draft EIS Comments

Julie Meredith, Deputy Project Director, WSDOT, updated the committee on the Draft EIS comments received to date. As of October 18, 2006, 657 individuals, businesses, community groups, and jurisdictions had provided 734 submissions via letters, emails, written comment forms, e-comments, and oral comments. Of the 734 submissions, the majority (422) had come from Seattle zip codes, and approximately 14 percent (100) were from the Eastside. Comments and questions received are being compiled and reviewed and will be responded to in the Final EIS.

Julie directed the committee's attention to the pie chart in the PowerPoint presentation addressing the top areas of interest to date:

6-Lane with Pacific Street Interchange

Julie reported that support for the 6-Lane Pacific Street Interchange option has been high. Over 350 comments had been submitted in favor of the Pacific Street Interchange option, while 86 comments expressed opposition. Of the 350 in support, 157 were from zip code 98112, which includes the Seattle neighborhoods of Capitol Hill, Madison Park, and Montlake. Individuals and groups in support of the Pacific Street Interchange option generally expressed opposition to all other alternatives.

Traffic

Traffic was the second area of interest and concern, and that comments concerning traffic primarily addressed the need to help move traffic through local neighborhoods or avoid neighborhoods altogether.

Transportation Systems/Transit

Many comments emphasized the need to connect SR 520 with alternative modes of transportation, including high occupancy vehicle (HOV) access, high capacity transit (HCT), and the future Sound Transit Link Light Rail station at Husky Stadium.

Parks and Recreation

Many comments expressed concern for the effects of the Project on the Washington Park Arboretum and park areas, as well as support for the additional green space that would be included in the 6-Lane Alternative. Julie added that some comments mentioned the effects of the Project on Husky Stadium and recreation related to the University.

Urban Design and Aesthetics

Comments on urban design and aesthetics varied widely, from support for lids, to concern for the visual design aspects of the Project alternatives.

Julie mentioned that other comments discussed funding and tolling, bike/pedestrian path, and the tube and tunnel citizen concept. Julie said that 63 comments were in favor of future study of the tube/tunnel proposal, while four comments were opposed to it. Sixteen comments were received in support of an 8-Lane Alternative, while three expressed opposition. She reminded the committee that this initial comment summary captures a snapshot in time and more comments are anticipated in the next week as the comment period comes to a close.

Next Steps

Dave Dye urged the continuing efforts in public involvement, and in obtaining as many public comments as possible. He noted that 800 submissions are impressive but not necessarily representative of the Project area. He also reported that at the end of the Draft EIS comment period, WSDOT will summarize all the comments and provide a report to the committee members. Dave stated that the November 15 Executive Committee meeting will include discussion from each jurisdiction on their recommendations for a preferred alternative. The recommendations will be provided to Doug MacDonald and the Governor. The Governor is expected to announce her recommendation on the preferred alternative by the end of the year.

Catastrophic Failure Planning

John Milton reported that the project team has developed a draft Catastrophic Failure Plan for the SR 520 Project, and is working with jurisdictions around Lake Washington to develop protocols should there be full or partial bridge failure. John said WSDOT is analyzing several different failure scenarios and this study should be completed in the spring of 2007.

Aubrey Davis provided some information about the pontoons. He explained that the new pontoons will be designed to carry HCT for either alternative. The new pontoons will be approximately six feet deeper than the existing pontoons. WSDOT is currently looking at potential construction sites. Aubrey noted that WSDOT is conducting preliminary analysis and working with agencies and Tribal Nations during the planning stages.

Dave Dye added that WSDOT has not made a decision on a location or how the pontoons will be constructed. He expressed the biggest challenge will be identifying a location to site a facility. Another challenge will be transporting the pontoons to Lake Washington. WSDOT is committed to exploring the best ways to deliver the Project and will continue to pay great attention to public outreach.

Committee Discussion

Richard Conlin, Seattle City Council, stated how important he felt the Catastrophic Failure Plan is. He said that Seattle has looked at the plan and is considering how to integrate protocols with WSDOT. He appreciated the work WSDOT has done to date and encouraged other cities to engage in this planning effort.

Dave Dye discussed permitting challenges associated with doing construction near salmon habitat. He expressed the need to prioritize fish during construction in respect to the location of barges, shading, and access for boats. He stated he is pleased with the active involvement of National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife in Project planning.

Mike Grady, City of Mercer Island, stated he has been working with WSDOT to get fish experts together to discuss potential effects.

Richard Conlin stated that he felt the Project is at a critical point and that Seattle has made real progress and significant steps forward. He thanked the Project team for working with communities and jurisdictions and for the opportunity to build cooperative relationships across Lake Washington. He reported to the committee that the Seattle City Council has written a draft preferred alternative resolution for SR 520 and shared this resolution with the group. He expressed concern over the inability to get a response from the Governor's office on mitigation for the Arboretum and its role in the Project. He noted that the Arboretum was of regional significance and felt it was important to remember that local communities will be impacted no matter which alternative was selected. He also stated that he felt that there could not be a successful Project without making sure mitigation efforts are considered in design. He urged other members to ask for a response from the Governor before moving forward.

Dave Asher, City of Kirkland City Council, proposed a joint meeting with the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID), legislators, and the Executive Committee sometime after the Governor's announcement.

Aubrey Davis said it was his understanding that the RTID needed a well-defined Project with a preferred alternative before finalizing the RTID project list.

Tim Ceis, City of Seattle, commented by saying this standard has not been consistently applied to all RTID projects. He noted that another significant issue is the funding gap. Tim hopes the Governor will give a sense of how the funding gap will be filled.

Dave Dye said that the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) will hold a meeting November 13 to discuss the SR 520 Project and WSDOT would be presenting at that meeting.

John Milton informed the members that an email will be sent to the Executive Committee members regarding the November 13 JTC meeting. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. at the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).

Public Comment

Jonathan Dubman, Montlake Community Club and BetterBridge.org

Jonathan Dubman said he supports the Pacific Street Interchange option as it provides a direct transit connection and fixes the Montlake Bridge bottleneck. Deciding on the preferred alternative and the funding plan will allow the Project to gain momentum during the legislative session. BetterBridge has been out in the community and has witnessed enthusiasm and also heard impatience on funding issues and other challenges with construction impacts. For example, the HOV lane closure on the Eastside during construction will need some future mitigation planning. He suggested that toll collection be initiated before construction begins and the revenue used to fund construction mitigation. Jonathan has heard enthusiasm for this plan. He suggested that widening Montlake Boulevard earlier may reduce some traffic delays during construction.

Aubrey concluded the meeting and reminded committee members that the next meeting will be November 15, 2006, at Saint Luke's Lutheran Church in Bellevue.

Executive Committee Attendees

Miles Adams, City of Medina
Dave Asher, City of Kirkland City Council
Claudia Balducci, City of Bellevue City Council
Mary-Alyce Burleigh, Sound Transit
Tim Ceis, City of Seattle
James Christian, Federal Highway Administration
Richard Conlin, Seattle City Council
Grace Crunican, Seattle Department of Transportation
Aubrey Davis, Washington Transportation Commission
Rob Fellows, King County Department of Transportation
Mike Grady, City of Mercer Island
Rosemarie Ives, City of Redmond
George Martin, City of Clyde Hill
Phil Noble, City of Bellevue
John Resha, City of Redmond

Public Attendees:

David Allen, Seattle Department of Transportation
Randy Bannecker, Bannecker & Associates Public Affairs
King Cushman, PSRC
Alan H. Deright, Seattle Resident
Peter Dewey, Clyde Hill Resident
Dave Godfrey, City of Kirkland
Virginia Gunby, Seattle Resident
Terry Marpert, City of Redmond
Ann Martin, Seattle Resident
Robin Mayhew, PSRC
Len Newstrum, Town of Yarrow Point
Susan Sanchez, Seattle Department of Transportation
Phyllis Shulman, City of Seattle
Rob Wilkinson, BetterBridge

Project Team Attendees:

Daniel Babuca, WSDOT

Broch Bender, WSDOT

Joy Carpine, WSDOT

Dave Dye, WSDOT

Cheryl Ellsworth, EnviroIssues

Michael Horntvedt, Parametrix

Paul Krueger, WSDOT

Julie Meredith, WSDOT

John Milton, WSDOT

Suanne Pelley, EnviroIssues

Brad Phillips, Parametrix

Pat Serie, EnviroIssues

Lindsay Yamane, Parametrix

Jenifer Young, CH2M Hill